

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----118732 171209Z /42
R 171135Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5754
INFO RUEHJ AMEMBASSY CAIRO 1808

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TRIPOLI 1138

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, LY, US
SUBJECT: QADHAFI ON US-LIBYAN RELATIONS

1. EVENING AUGUST 16 I HAD LONG SESSION AT THE RESIDENCE WITH LIBYAN CHARGE IN WASHINGTON, AHMED MADFAI. ALTHOUGH HE IS NOW ONLY 42, MADFAI WAS A SIGNAL CORPS COLONEL AND QADHAFI'S UNIT COMMANDER AT TIME OF 1969 REVOLUTION. AFTER TWO YEARS IN JAIL WITH OTHER SENIOR OFFICERS, HE WAS RELEASED, BUILT UP A BUSINESS IN TRIPOLI, AND REESTABLISHED GOOD RELATIONS WITH LIBYAN LEADERSHIP, INCLUDING QADHAFI. HE HAD ONLY BEEN AT HIS NEW POST IN WASHINGTON TWO MONTHS (APRIL-JUNE) WHEN HE RETURNED TO LIBYA FOR CONSULTATIONS. MADFAI COMES ACROSS AS MODEST AND SERIOUS.

2. ON AUG 11 MADFAI SPENT THREE HOURS IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH QADHAFI DEVOTED LARGELY TO THE SUBJECT OF US-LIBYAN RELATIONS. AT THAT TIME QADHAFI SAID HE DID NOT INTEND TO BREAK POLITICAL OR ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., THE IMPLICATION BEING THAT SOME LIBYANS HAD ADVISED HIM TO DO SO IN RETALIATION FOR U.S. PUNITIVE MEASURES AGAINST LIBYA. QADHAFI WISHED NOT ONLY TO MAINTAIN RELATIONS BUT TO IMPROVE THEM BECAUSE IT WAS IN LIBYA'S INTEREST TO HAVE A BALANCED
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POSITION IN THE WORLD AND AVOID DEPENDENCE ON THE SOVIET UNION. THE AMERICAN REFUSAL TO DEAL WITH LIBYA IN A POSITIVE MANNER, AS ILLUSTRATED BY OUR REFUSAL TO EXCHANGE AMBASSADORS, HAD PUSHED LIBYA FURTHER TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION THAN HE DESIRED. HE CHARGED MADHAI WITH DOING WHAT HE COULD IN THE U.S. TO RECTIFY THIS UNSATISFACTORY SITUATION.

3. QADHAFI PROFESSED NOT TO UNDERSTAND WHY THE U.S. PLACED LIBYA IN THE FOREFRONT OF STATES SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM. WHILE DEFENDING HIS SUPPORT FOR PALESTINIANS AND LIBERATION MOVEMENTS, HE SAID IT WAS LIBYAN POLICY TO OPPOSE TERRORISM. LIBYA WAS AN INDEPENDENT COUNTRY AND COULD NOT TAKE ORDERS FROM THE U.S. HOWEVER, HE WOULD WELCOME AN ONGOING EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION WITH THE US REGARDING TERRORISM IN THE HOPE THAT MISUNDERSTANDINGS COULD BE OVERCOME.

4. WITH REGARD TO THE MIDDLE EAST, QADHAFI EXPRESSED RESENTMENT THAT THE U.S. HAD NOT DISCUSSED WITH HIS GOVERNMENT AN ISSUE THAT CONCERNED HIM AND OTHER ARABAS DIRECTLY. HE WAS NOT, AS SOME BELIEVED, AGAINST PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST; BUT ANY REAL PEACE HAD TO BE BASED ON JUSTICE. QADHAFI'S OWN VIEW OF JUSTICE WAS THAT POST-1948 SETTLERS IN PALESTINE SHOULD RETURN TO THEIR COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN AND THE REMAINING ARABS AND JEWS LIVE PEACEFULLY TOGETHER IN THE HOLD LAND. WHILE THIS MIGHT BE HIS IDEAL, HE WELL UNDERSTOOD THAT IT WAS NOT PRACTICAL AND THAT OTHER MORE REALISTIC SOLUTIONS SHOULD BE EXPLORED. IN SUCH A SEARCH FOR PEACE HE WOULD HAVE A CONTRIBUTION TO MAKE. HE FELT THAT THE U.S. HAD NOT UNDERSTOOD THIS IN ITS STUDIED POLICY OF IGNORING HIM AND HIS VIEWS. HE WOULD WELCOME
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HEARING FROM THE U.S. WHAT IT HAD IN MIND. HE DOUBTED THAT ANYTHING COULD COME OF THE SADAT INITIATIVE BUT WOULD NEVERTHELESS LIKE TO HAVE OUR VIEWS. (MADFAI SAID HE POINTED OUT TO QADHAFI THAT, IF NOTHING ELSE, THE SADAT INITIATIVE HAD MADE A MAJOR POSITIVE IMPACT ON U.S. PUBLIC OPINION. QADHAFI ACKNOWLEDGED THIS BUT REMAINED SKEPTICAL REGARDING OUR ABILITY TO BRING ISRAEL TO ACCEPT A JUST SOLUTION.)

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EXDIS

5. QADHAFI ALSO DEFENDED LIBYA'S POSITION VIS-A-VIS ITS NEIGHBORS. (MADFAI HAD APPARENTLY TOLD HIM THIS WAS ONE OF THE PROBLEMS RAISED WITH HIM IN WASHINGTON.) HE NOTED THAT LIBYAN RELATIONS WITH TUNISIA AND THE SUDAN HAD BEEN GREATLY IMPROVED, THAT RELATIONS WITH ALGERIA WERE GOOD, AND THAT AN EFFORT WAS BEING MADE TO BRING THE CONFLICT IN CHAD TO AN END. RELATIONS WITH EGYPT WERE MORE COMPLICATED, BASED AS THEY WERE ON INTER-ARAB RELATIONSHIPS. EGYPT HAD ATTACKED LIBYA MILITARILY A YEAR AGO EVEN THOUGH LIBYA UNDERSTOOD THAT THE U.S. HAD OPPOSED IT. SUCH AN ATTACK MIGHT BE REPEATED.

6. MADFAI OBSERVED THAT LIBYAN POLICY WAS FORMULATED BY QADHAFI, WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY CARRYING OUT HIS ORDERS. QADHAFI HAD TOLD HIM TO RETURN TO LIBYA TO BRIEF HIM ANY TIME HE WISHED, WHETHER OR NOT HE HAD INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. THE KEY PERSON IN DEALING WITH QADHAFI WAS THE SECRETARY OF INDUSTRY AND MINERAL WEALTH, JADALLAH AZZOUZ AL-TALHI, WHO IS NOW ACTING AS "LIAISON SECRETARY" REPLACING TAHA SHARIF BIN AMIR, WHO DIED IN A HELICOPTER CRASH LAST MARCH. QADHAFI HAD ASKED MADFAI TO MEET WITH AL-TALHI AUGUST 17.

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7. IN RESPONSE TO MADFAI'S PRESENTATION, I SAID THAT MOST OF WHAT QADHAFI HAD SAID WOULD BE WELCOMED BY THE USG. THERE REMAINED THE QUESTION OF HOW WE COULD FOLLOW UP STEPS TO DEVELOP A DIALOGUE AT VARIOUS LEVELS BOTH IN WASHINGTON AND TRIPOLI TO DISCUSS SOME OF THE SPECIFIC ITEMS THAT QADHAFI HAD RAISED. I REFERRED TO THE DESIRE OF BOTH SIDES TO IMPROVE RELATIONS AT THE TIME OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S INAUGURATION, AND REMINDED MADFAI THAT THIS PROCESS HAD UNFORTUNATELY BEEN OVERTAKEN BY THE INFORMATION WE RECEIVED REGARDING A LIBYAN-BACKED PLAN TO ASSASSINATE OUR AMBASSADOR IN CAIRO. THIS HAD TROUBLED THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF OUR

GOVT, BUT WE HAD NOT PUBLICIZED IT, SINCE OUR INTEREST WAS NOT IN A FURTHER DETERIORATION OF US-LIBYAN RELATIONS BUT IN ENSURING THAT NO SUCH PLAN WOULD BE CARRIED OUT AGAINST ANY U.S. OFFICIALS. SINCE THE PLAN HAD BEEN CANCELLED, OUR PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE HAD BEEN ACCOMPLISHED, AND A YEAR AND A HALF HAD PASSED DURING WHICH THERE APPEARED TO BE A LESSENING OF LIBYAN SUPPORT FOR TERRORISM.

8. I TOLD MADFAI THAT THE USG WOULD PROBABLY WELCOME QADHAFI'S SUGGESTION REGARDING FURTHER EXCHANGES OF INFORMATION ON TERRORISM. DISCUSSIONS OF OTHER ISSUES SUCH AS THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS COULD DEVELOP WITHIN AN ONGOING DIALOGUE. I SAID I WOULD REPORT OUR CONVERSATION TO WASHINGTON AND SEEK FURTHER GUIDANCE. MEANWHILE, MADFAI SAID HE WOULD SUGGEST TO LIAISON SECRETARY AL-TALHI THAT HE RECEIVE ME SO AS TO ESTABLISH A DIRECT CHANNEL TO QADHAFI.

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